Congo News Letter

SEPTEMBER 1957

The Tower Rises at Boko

CONGO NEWS LETTER

Vol. XLIX SEPTEMBER 1957 No. 3

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Published Quarterly by the Missionaries of the A.B.F.M.S.

Subscription price 75 cents a year; 3 years or 3 subscriptions for $2.00. Subscriptions may be sent to Treasurer, A.B.F.M.S., 152 Madison Ave., New York 16, N.Y. Subscription price in Congo 35 francs. Address correspondence to Editor C.N.L., B. P. 4728, Leopoldville 2, Belgian Congo.

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PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

Oh, Thou who couldst forgive
Cruel hearts that plotted long
To take Thy life and kill
Thee, who had done no wrong;

Oh, Thou, who couldst forgive
When Thou wert shamed and cursed,
When faithful ones had fled
And all was at its worst;

Oh, great, forgiving Christ,
Forgive my petty ways,
For thoughtless words offend;
Each careless act dismays.

Remind me, loving Christ,
Of all Thou suffered there —
Of all who took Thy life
But were forgiv'n in prayer.

Help me, like Thee, to love,
To pray and to forgive;
Thy Spirit ruling all
Until, like Thee, I live.

— EMILY KEYES

GOD'S HOUSE at BOKO

By Helen Robbins

JANUARY 1948. A small pick-up truck drew to the side of the road that led across the grassy plain. A dozen Africans and a missionary family of five stepped down and into the grass that reached well above the heads of the tallest ones. Led by an African guide they carefully made their way brushing the grass aside and walking carefully, for there was no path nor sign. Only by the side of the road there was a pile of sticks, raised several feet above the ground and resting on a framework of larger sticks. Not a pile of firewood, but a fetish raised to show that a mighty hunter, now dead, had passed that way and found his game. It might lead one who followed him to happy hunting.

The little group penetrated about a kilometer on the plain and stopped. Looking over the area as well as they could with high grass all about, they pointed this way and that, speaking in visions, in dreams, — in faith that one day over to the west would be a hospital, farther to the left school buildings and dormitories, beyond dwellings for Congolese workers and missionaries. And there in the center of all of it the brightest vision of all! There some day would rise a fine church to the glory of God and to the preaching of Salvation in Christ to the Bayaka tribe of the Congo.

The little group knelt in prayer, dedicating the area, that came to have the name "Boko", to God and to the vision which they had seen that day. The tall grass became the walls of the sanctuary that day, and God's own sky the elevated arches of the church.

September 1949. After anxious months of waiting permission had been granted for occupation. A few thatch buildings had been erected. A small group of workers and school children had been collected. A new Mission Station had been brought into being.

Daily and Sunday worship were held in a Chapel of God's own creation — a clearing in the forest. Fork sticks were forced into the ground and trunks of small trees laid across for pews. A rough stand made of sticks from the forest served as pulpit. Inadequate in regard to comfort, to the vagaries of the weather, to acoustics, yet surrounded by beauty — and God was there!

January 1950. Young and old, male and female, dark-skinned and fair-skinned, busy and happy! Busy building a house of worship. Building with trees and sticks from the forest and forest string, building with large bundles of thatch carried in from the plain. A roof of thatch, half walls of thatch, openings in the walls for entrances, the ground for the floor, and again tree trunks for seats. Still very inadequate, not at all beautiful — but God was there!

September 1956. The grassy plain had been transformed. the hospital — there it was, a school building, dormitory, dwellings for Congolese and missionaries, a shop, a water tower. There was the noise of hammer and saw, of cement mixer and truck. And in the very center of it all men were digging — digging a foundation for a fine church that was to rise to the glory of God and to the preaching of Salvation in Christ to the Bayaka tribe of the Congo. And in the midst of the group was the dedicated architect who had left his home and work in the States to build for God in the Congo.

Week by week and month by month astonishment grew, the astonishment of those who had never seen such a building in all their lives. Folks whose experience had been limited to grass huts in the village looked and looked and looked in awe.

Christians from all our area gave their service in the digging and carrying of rock from the stream bed. The quota for a man was a cubic meter and some carried more. Christians of the white man's country had given money and this was their share — hard, back-breaking labor performed gladly for the Lord.

All who worked thrilled in the knowledge that this was to be God's house, those who felled the trees in the forest, those who split and planed, those who mixed cement and moulded the cement blocks, those who sawed and hammered, those who hauled water and sand. It was God's house they were building, the first permanent house of God in a great area dedicated to the preaching of the Gospel of Salvation by faith in the Son of God. The high walls, the great trusses, the lovely arches, the high vault, the tower, the beautiful furnishing of lovely Congo wood — love to God went into the building of them all.

June 16, 1957. The church was finished. The people of God had been called to dedicate the church to God, the Great Creator. From far and near they came, some who could pay their way in trucks and carrying their belongings in suitcases, others who walked many hours on the way with a little bundle on their heads, some who need no suitcase or bundle for they had nothing to carry. The church was full and folks still standing outside. Pews were pushed closer together and others held in reserve moved in. Children and young folks were asked to sit on the floor. Twenty sat in a pew where only fifteen should have been. Over twelve hundred people were there.

It was the greatest day of all for the Bayaka Church, a day of deep spiritual experience that we who have passed by great churches many a time without a thought might emulate. It was God's own house. It was adequate; it was beautiful — God was there!

Many will worship in it only once or twice a year, for their villages are far away, but always they will know it is there, the symbol of their faith. Humble believers stepping out from their grass hovels in the early dawn will remember their God and His sanctuary at Boko, the beautiful sanctuary which they of the grass hovels have helped to build. But their hearts will not be grass hovels, but sanctuaries of love to their Saviour.

Thirty-six lives were dedicated to the Lord in baptism that day, one missionary's child among thirty-five brothers and sisters in Christ. At the table of the Lord that evening in the lovely lighting of the sanctuary — at that table where there is no distinction of persons, Christians, Christian workers, missionaries dedicated anew their lives.

During a prayer service shortly before the Dedication, one young man gave his testimony. He told how he had been one of the first at Boko, a school boy in the first class ever held there. He had helped build the first thatched house, the first thatched chapel. He told how in those days they had talked about what Boko would be in the years ahead and about the House of God we had hoped to build. "But", he said, "I never thought that I would live to see that house. I never even thought it was possible. I thought my children might see it, but not I." But he had become a Christian, had grown up and was married, and now he was one of the workmen building the church that was almost finished. "When we began building the church" he said, "I did not believe we would really finish it. But now it is almost finished and I have helped to build it. Now, though I am still a young man, I will worship in the church I thought only my children would see. God has made this possible. Then he added with real emotion, "Now I *do* believe in God".

May this House of God, made possible by the love of American Christians, by the devotion of a young missionary family, and by the faithfulness of Congo believers, lead many to the strengthening of their faith, and may it for many years stand to the glory of God and for preaching of Salvation in Christ to the Bayaka tribe of the Congo.

A place without fire will not send up smoke. (A gathering does not meet over nothing.)

TATA "LET'S GO"—THE MISSION BUILDER

By Dolores and Chester Scott

THE purpose of any missionary is evangelism, whether he be the mission treasurer, school inspector or mission builder. The mission builder has two roads to further evangelism in his field. Primarily he releases the evangelist from the task of building his house, his church, his schools etc. His other opportunity is in the hour by hour relationship with the workmen on the mission station.

Your Congo mission builder has been asked to relate the problems connected with his work. Those problems could best be likened to the rocks that make up the rapids in the Congo River. There are many. Some show high above the level of the force, some lie just under the surface and cause the force to be detoured over and around, some lie deep beneath the surface and they are the ones that can't be exposed but cause most of the fuss on the surface. The river has not stopped flowing yet because of the rocks in the rapids and it is not about to stop. It just has to work harder.

Five short years ago we knew that God had most beautifully and most definitely called us to serve him as builders in the Belgian Congo. He opened all the doors before us and in a few months we were in this land to which we were called but of which we had many misgivings.

Our first week in Congo we saw small, nearly naked men cut down a huge hardwood tree and begin the tedious job of cutting it up by hand. This, we were informed, was to be the source of our lumber supply. We saw men clawing at the earth with steel bars to dig out large pieces of rock. We saw other men sit for hour after hour pounding on this rock with a small hammer to chip off small pieces. This, we were told, was to be our gravel supply. Men made cement bricks one at a time by pounding a mixture of cement, sand and the precious gravel into a small form and then slowly urged the block out of the form. One carpenter was cutting and planing lumber by hand to make a door. We were told he had worked every day for a week and the door was

far from finished. The men all moved like they had lead in their shoes but we knew that couldn't be because they were barefooted.

The situation looked hopeless until we paused together in prayer and felt shame at our momentary lack of faith. We knew then that in our own strength we were not sufficient but we had nst called ourselves to Congo nor had we come here in our own strength. That is the last doubt we have felt.

The next day "Tata Let's Go" was born to the Congo. Not knowing one word of their language our entry into the work was made by diving in and yelling "Let's go" at everyone. The workmen knew that their missionary family had arrived and, bless their hearts, they gave us a loyalty that filled every gap between the great differences of their lives and ours.

Problems, yes the mission builder has had many, e.g. —

Problem —Tata Npoyo refused to wear clothes to work. He, a widower with two children, and a good father needed the work. He would take the clothes we gave him, thank us and then come to work in his "dish cloth."

Problem — The patients would not go into the new hospital until a native died there, and thereby the tax to the white people had been paid.

Problem — Ingiance gave Musoba's soul to us to take to America so that we might have a slave. This caused a riot that resulted in more than one bruised head.

Problem — Bwama put fetishes around the houses of our Bakongos so that they and their families would die. Another riot.

Problem — 150 miles of paths to be cut through the jungle with all its heat, insects and undergrowth.

Problem — We have purchased not less than a dozen wives for our workmen and Kapita Nsuni went into a rage because we would not buy him two.

Problem — Our native chauffeur left us stranded in the midst of one of the roaring grass fires that sweep Congo every year.

These are just a very few. New ones come every day to flavor life to its fullest.

We have traveled more than one hundred thousand

kilometers over the difficult Congo roads, mostly in our 5-ton construction truck. Seldom we have had the items of material or equipment we need, always a way has opened up for us to improvise and keep the work rolling.

Now the fleeting months have stacked up behind us to form nearly four years in Congo. For every one of those months worked in Congo we have completed one building. A big secondary school with an auditorium, six class rooms, office, library, dormitories and cook house for one hundred fifty boys, hospital complete, native staff house, four missionary residences and others. Besides this work we have helped in construction or land work on each of our eight mission stations.

Now we are standing on the eve of two important events. In a few days the dedication of the new Boko church and then the closing of the book on chapter one of our lives in Congo as The Mission Builder.

Things exciting, things thrilling, things deeply spiritual and things satisfying have woven the road we have traveled these past four years. Nearly every inch has been lighted by God's will for us. The only thing in this world that could be more wonderful would be to climb in that light and never let a step stray to one side or the other.

As the river works its way through the rocks it is used of God to make the world a more beautiful place, the sound it leaves in the air is one of victory. Victory over the rocks that stood in its way.

You have some good palm-nuts; bring them here so that I may look at them. (*A way the elders use to get help from the younger ones.*)

He who waits while the mother of another goes to market has red eyes. (*You will weary of waiting if you expect others to do things for you.*)

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY AT SONA BATA

By Roland G. Metzger

LAST year it was casually mentioned that Sona Bata station would be fifty years old in 1957, and it seemed that we ought to have some little program to celebrate the occasion. As the months slipped by the matter was discussed from time to time. Then the Sona Bata Alumni Association in Leopoldville became interested. A joint committee was formed, and suddenly, before most of us were aware of what was happening, the event grew beyond anything we had thought possible.

One must understand Sona Bata's place in the life of this part of Congo in order to appreciate the significance of the enthusiasm which grew day by day as the date for the anniversary

The choir of school children at the celebrations envol

celebrations drew near. Sona Bata has been and still is an exceedingly fruitful evangelistic field. In the 1920's and early 1930's from 1000 to 3000 were baptized every year. Many thousands of the more than 300,000 now living in Leopoldville came from the villages and churches of the Sona Bata district, and still consider this home. The schools in the villages, at the church centers, and on the station, have turned out hundreds of young people each year who today live and work in Leopoldville, Thysville, Cattier, and the many other large cities and centers of the Lower Congo. For many years Sona Bata hospital has been known far and wide for its outstanding contributions to the best in Christian dedicated medicine and nurses' training. Tens of thousands have found healing and learned of Christ in this place. In one extraordinary year 900 babies saw the light of day in the maternity section.

So, as plans grew, they hardly kept pace with the enthusiasm and interest that spread out everywhere. The interest and help given by the alumni in Leopoldville was one of the high points. On Friday, May 24th, the day before the celebrations were to start, some of the officers of the Alumni Assoc. secured leave from their jobs in banks, the shipping company, and government bureaus, to come and help with final arrangements. Already the alumni had arranged for radio publicity on the African emissions of the government operated station. On Saturday the crowds began to arrive; on foot, by truck and car, by train, and on bicycles. By Sunday at 10 a.m. the most conservative estimate put the crowd at 5000, but most official estimates gave the number as 7000 or more. One thing we are sure of, people were everywhere on this very large station that stretches 3/4 of a mile from the hospital to the last missionary residence.

Saturday evening a special train of 17 cars, packed with nearly 2000 alumni, their guests, and their friends, arrived from Leopoldville. The train was delayed in starting and did not reach Sona Bata until 9 : 30 p.m. An evening service began then, with songs, prayer, and reminiscing, which lasted until the electric light motor was turned off at midnight. But even then no one slept. Folks found old friends, talked, ate picnic lunches, and discussed the "good old days".

The main service was to begin at 10 a.m. Sunday. Before that time the great open space between the two new Primary School buildings, and in front of the church, had to be cleaned up and put back in order. Planks resting on cement blocks furnished seating for about 2500, the rest of the crowd stood or sat on the ground. A public address system with two very powerful loud speakers, all furnished by the alumni, had to be checked.

Official guests began to arrive at 9:30. Those who were to have part in the program were: Rev. Thompson, Secretary of the Congo Protestant Council; Mr. Schoutteten, Commissaire de District, who also was representing the Gouverneur de Province who was unable to come; Rev. Armstrong, our own mission secretary; and Mr. Collard, Administrator of this territory. Other official guests included the American Consul General, the director of education for the Province, the assistant chief medical officer for the Province, secretaries and representatives of our own and sister missions, the chief protestant chaplain of the Congo armed forces, the director of the Catholic mission located just across the railroad tracks from us, the two Congolese *Chef de Secteur*, and many others.

Speeches of welcome and greetings followed one after another. Special music numbers were presented by own our school children, our nurses' choir, the alumni choir, and the Protestant Choir of Leopoldville. One very interesting number was a hymn by the group from Yongo church. They accompanied themselves with drums and flutes, as were used in days gone by at all large church gatherings. They did it most effectively. Two Belgians and five Congolese from the government information service were here to report, photograph, and record the celebrations. The main parts of the service were recorded on a portable tape recorder. The drum and flute number became the theme for the radio programs later broadcast here in Congo in the French, Kikongo, Lingala, and tshiluba languages. A condensed version was also sent to Belgium where it was broadcast on the European and local services of Radio Belgium.

One deeply moving and impressive part of the ceremonies was recognition given 14 pastors and village evangelists who had served 40 years or more. Pastor Nsiata with 56 years of service

and still an active pastor was the senior, though retired pastors Bangu and Kikwakwa had entered the work earlier and are older in years. Each man received a small gold medal and a certificate. The kindliness, understanding, and inner tranquility of soul evident on their faces was commented on by many of the official guests and in the newspaper accounts. Many of us had tears in our eyes as Secretary Ben Armstrong pinned on their medals, and speaking to each one recalled some memory of the years since he and Rhoda Armstrong began their own missionary service here at Sona Bata in 1923.

Following the speeches a splendid historical pageant was presented. Interesting scenes from the history of our Baptist work in this area were depicted. Mr. Frederickson and Mr. Broholm began work at the first site at Kinzila in 1890. Later they moved to Kifwa, and then in 1907 Mr. MacDiarmid began the first buildings here at Sona Bata. Some of the most interesting scenes of the pageant showed the local chief giving the land and also trees to be cut for lumber to the missionaries; Mr. Frederickson redeeming and freeing a slave at the market; church and school people carrying rock and supplies for the first church and later for the hospital; and the first class of nurses to graduate. One thing which amused everyone was the near perfect portrayal of Mr. MacDiarmid by Pastor Munzekila. He spoke his part in Kikongo with a white man's accent, and duplicated characteristic gestures perfectly. Another laugh-provoking scene was when the strings tying a blanket to a pole broke and a "patient" being carried by two men to the hospital was unceremoniously dumped out on the ground.

Following the ceremonies the alumni served a feast to most of the crowd, and the official guests were served a cold buffet. By 5 o'clock in the afternoon most of the thousands of visitors had left, and the missionary and Congolese staff were trying to rest and to relax tense nerves and tired muscles. A wonderful time had passed into history, but we believe Christ was honored, as He has always had the preeminence in all activities of the past, and as He will have in the years of service which lie in the future 'till He comes.

LADIES OF THE SAME CLOTH

By Margaret Alsen

WHEN I think of the last Women's World Day of Prayer service I attended in the States, with a huge crowd of women in a fashionable New York church, with a famous speaker and lovely music and hothouse flowers, I smile over the contrast with the one I have just experienced. And I don't know but what I'd rather be a part of this one !

We here on the station got off to a rather early start, quite by accident. Somehow we mistook the hour, and we drove over to the African city sixty minutes ahead of time. I'm glad we did, or I would never have had an idea of how eagerly the Congolese women were awaiting the event. There were at least thirty women ahead of us, and more were arriving every minute. They waited patiently outside the church gate, since at that hour the school children were having their daily chapel service. Most of the women had their babies on their backs, and their Bibles and hymnals on their heads, as usual, but what was very definitely *not* usual was that nearly all of them were dressed alike in a chocolate brown cloth with a white lace design, and a headscarf of copper and brown. They were celebrating by appearing for the first time in a "uniform" they had selected for the just-created-this-year Woman's Society — *La Société des Femmes Chrétiennes.*

The uniforms were their own idea. Since we missionaries are also members of the Woman's Society, we too have uniforms now, and it is reported that other Congolese women say, "Behold how these Protestants love one another — they all wear the same cloth !" That's all to the good, though it certainly is not the only way we express our love for one another.

The church had been decorated with pink hibiscus flowers and the bright yellow flowers of an African shrub. Three African women (and a baby) sat up in the front, ready for their parts in the program, and three hundred other women (and goodness knows how many babies) crammed themselves into the small, shabby building. The service was mostly in Kikongo, with some singing in Lingala, and twenty different women prayed in twenty

different languages. Of course, we forced that a little bit, with missionaries praying in Greek and Flemish to bring the total up, but sixteen of the languages were Africa's own, spoken by women who had migrated to Leopoldville from tribal districts all over Congo. Some of them were well poised, and some were very shy, scarcely speaking above a murmur. The president of the Society, Mama Mattie Marie, gave a short talk, and though of course I couldn't understand her, I was happy to be a part of the warm fellowship of that meeting.

After the large meeting in the main church, teams of the women went out to hold services for other smaller settlements a little farther away from the center of the city, and in the afternoon three carloads of teams went still farther out to the churches in outlying villages. Jerry Weaver loaned a helping hand and acted as chauffeur of the truck, into which piled three teams of women. His African cook and I went along too as interested spectators. Now, the back of a pick-up truck isn't the most comfortable place in the world to ride, even when it is fitted out with wooden benches along the sides, and when after ten minutes you leave the paved roads of the city for the narrow clay roads of the bush, pitted and rutted from recent rains, you have a bone-jolting, bruise-risking proposition. But the women smiled and joked as they gripped any support available, and laughed when they were jounced off the seat, and grinned ruefully when heads cracked against overhead apparatus. You can't stay strangers long in that sort of situation. My handful of Kikongo words and their far larger handfuls of French words proved enough, with grimaces and gestures, to carry on lively communication. After a half hour of travel between walls of grass and palm, over a road that sometimes widened into little settlements, we let off the first team at the village of Kimbwala and proceeded along the same road to Ngombe, where the church has a pastor. The women of the village had already gathered in the school-church, and though we were late, the pastor's wife (Mama Mattie's mother) had kept them, sure that we would eventually arrive. They sang us a welcome song, said hello with their lovely custom of soft hand-claps, and, after we had left another team, waved us on our way toward the last village out, Mfuti.

The road grew narrower and ruttier, and I was mighty thankful that Jerry was at the wheel, and not I. In one place, Jerry and his cook had to get out and hack fallen branches out of the way with a machete (standard Congo car equipment), and in another place we got downhill between ditches several feet deep where there was practically no roadbed left, wondering how we would ever make it up again on the way back. Then, rather abruptly, the road ended in a tiny clearing. The truck turned around and backed through the underbrush a hundred yards or so, bringing us to within a few steps of a little river, in which several African youngsters were bathing, and across which a substantial tree trunk was serving as a bridge. One of the ladies had worn high heels in honor of the importance of the occasion, but she made it across with the help of a staff. I had worn loafers, but took even them off in order to be a bit more sure of foot; it would hardly do to appear at a church service soaked from a dunking in the river. But it made an impression on the ladies — on the way back they told the others with evident approval that Mama Alsen had gone across the river barefoot.

We climbed the hill on the other side of the river trailed by a growing group of youngsters and went to the school-church, where we found, not the waiting ladies we had expected, but the village teacher, drilling his fifteen or twenty charges. He explained to us that the ladies had given up and gone home, but he dispatched messengers to gather them again, and our twenty-minute wait gave me time to take a good look at the building. I was told that it was not very old, but to me it gave the impression of having been in service a long time. One climbs in gingerly over a high threshold and sees a room that would seat fifty or sixty people. There are large window holes in the sides, but no frames, panes or screens. To the right, half the "floor" is cement. The left half, several inches lower, is red dirt, stoney and unswept. At the front, a wavering line of building blocks indicates the space for the preacher, and another group of blocks supports black-painted boards, very worn, which serve as chalk-boards for the school. But a glance out the window lifts one's heart. Just outside lovely blossoming acacia trees raise their yellow candles, and a colony of birds who have built their nests apartment-house style

in some high bare trees, twitter loudly and cheerfully.

Finally the women decided to start the service. The audience consisted of four or five women (with babies), a grizzled old man leaning on a crooked staff, the teacher, the schoolboys, and the delegation from Leopoldville. We sang, one of the team women spoke, we sang some more, another woman spoke, and we prayed. The speaking and praying I couldn't understand, but the poise and sincerity of the women impressed me greatly. At the last minute, we remembered to take up a collection. The Day of Prayer is, after all, a time for missionary giving. And sure enough, tied in the corners of their *kitambalas*, the village women had brought a few francs. Added to the collections from the other villages and from the big churches in Leopoldville, the money is going to the Congo Protestant Council for the expenses of Bible Women in the growing cities of Congo.

The trip back home was not a let-down. The whole congregation accompanied us down the hill back to the river, and a few of the schoolboys even followed the truck as we drove away, running until their lungs couldn't take any more, and then grinning and waving until we disappeared. We gave the teacher a short lift back to his own little village, managed, with held breaths, to negotiate the uphill climb where the roadbed was so badly washed out, and came to Ngombe again. The pastor's wife, after the meeting, had taken the visiting ladies back to her house and served them nsafus (a pretty blue tropical fruit with deliciously bitter green flesh) and they weren't quite ready to leave. So we waited and as we rested, along came the Ngombe teacher with a double file of boys and girls stringing along behind him. He had had them all down to the Congo river for baths. Congolese are the bathingest people! The youngsters hung around watching us hang around. I tried touching a little girl's bead necklace and saying "pretty", but she just stared at me — I'd hoped for at least a smile. Then we loaded up again, and I got a prize — a Congolese year-old baby to hold for the trip home. He was so good! He took great notice of all that was going on around him, but every so often he'd twist his head around and stare fixedly at my face. At first I thought it was my glasses that interested him, until it dawned on me that I wasn't the color he was used

to. But he never once cried or even whimpered, all that long rough drive.

It had been only an afternoon's trip, but we were all pretty exhausted. The next day I saw some of the ladies, and we compared aches and pains. One of them said, "Never again!", but I'm sure she didn't mean it. For all of us, American foreign missionaries and Congolese home missionaries, sharing our faith and our Christian experience with others, and knowing that we in our little corner of the world are a part of a world-wide day of worship and prayer, had widened our horizons of friendship, and had drawn us closer to each other and to the Lord whom we all serve.

. . . *AND RUNNING WATER*

By Esther and Bud Fraser

IF you were suddenly swished out of your environment, and gently dropped on to a mission station in the heart of Africa, what would you expect to find ? Palm trees? Yes. A place hewn out of the jungle? Maybe. Missionaries? A few.

We must admit that as newly appointed missionaries we had very little idea of what a mission station was like. We had heard wonderful reports of baptisms, and of souls being brought to Christ. We also knew that some missionaries spent weeks out in the district supervising schools and examining candidates for baptism. But it wasn't until we arrived at our Kikongo mission that we realized just exactly what a mission station was, after all.

Our first impression of the station was that it was large, and rather important looking. One of the first things that caught our eye was a good sized church in the center of the station. We soon distinguished other important buildings such as the school, and the hospital, with its nice, new maternity ward. There were missionary residences, too, with electricity in the evenings and running water!

On our station we have the Bible Institute, a very large and lovely building and something of which to be proud. Each student family lives in a small but neatly constructed cement house

and each family has its garden that it is responsible for. From this school will come the future pastors and leaders of our work.

The stations generally provide good living quarters for their native nurses, school teachers and students. These cement and cinderblock houses are perhaps one of the most impressive fea tures of the stations. One has only to compare them with the mud huts of the village to realize what an upward step they are.

All in all you might compare a station to a small community with its hospital, school, etc. Our Kikongo population is 800. There is, however, much more than meets the eye in the administration of this community. At first it seems unbelievably complicated. Work accounts, car and travel accounts, pay rolls and government reports all have a part in driving a missionary to distraction. One has a feeling it will take a long, long time before he can understand it fully.

Many people when they think of Africa visualize a thick jungle filled with wild beasts and exotic birds. Actually there are many areas where there is nothing much but tall elephant grass and brush. In our area there is heavy jungle growth along the rivers and streams. The crest of the hills are for the most part brush land.

The jungle is alive and extremely interesting. Tropical plants, huge trees with trailing vines paint a picture of splendor which is the Africa most people imagine. One hears beautiful bird-calls and sees the insect world at its abundant best. It pays to be cautious in the jungle, too. Leopards have been killed in our area and not long ago a mother lion and her cub inspected our station during the night. Judging from the footprints that were found the next morning she was especially interested in our cook's house! During certain times of the year lions can be heard roaring in the distance.

The station is only the central headquarters for the missionary. The work is not confined to it alone but reaches out into the district. Here the missionary works with native pastors and school teachers in an effort to win this vast country to Christ. There are many villages yet which do not have a Christian witness. Pray with us then, that God will supply laborers for His harvest field here in the Congo.

FAR ABOVE RUBIES

By Janet Boone

ANCIENT African protocol put a woman in her place. Male authority was unquestioned. The woman carried the heavy load on her head and the baby on her back as she respectfully followed her unburdened husband in the jungle path. Even in the more recent years of books and chairs and civilization the girls worked in the manioc fields while the boys went to class. The women sat humbly on mats while the men sat honorably on chairs.

I just came from comforting a young woman who mourns her older brother. She told me, "He was the only son of our mother". The rest were only girls. Only *girls* — only women. Inestimable times I've heard those words since we arrived in Congo in 1947. Not only from the men but oftener from the women themselves.

The teaching of Congolese women is my labor of love. To me these women are jewels-in-the-rough needing understanding, love and a chance to reveal the beauty hidden by native customs, taboos, ignorance and superstition.

Dr. Frank Laubach came to Congo to introduce his effective method of teaching illiterates to read. His concern and his contagious love for these "seeing blind" opened my eyes to the romance of adult literacy work. The aim is to guide adult non-readers from the darkness of a letterless world to the light of literacy. To lead them from frustration so familliar in this land to faith in the only Light of the World. There are more illiterate women than men and our chosen work has placed me in contact with many of these women.

In Leopoldville, Mama Madeleine was my first pupil. She was illiterate even though her husband was one of our primary school teachers. She came faithfully in spite of home responsibilities, a chronically sick child and a natural reticence. There followed more learners, more classes, more experiences of joy in opening the eyes of illiterates and then came our furlough in the States in 1951.

When we returned for our second term as missionaries in Congo we were assigned to Sona Bata. Soon I had literacy classes started for women. One class met each morning. We used our back porch to avoid the morning sun. In the afternoon another class divided itself between our dining room and adjoining front porch. Most of the women were mothers and brought their last one or two children with them. These eager learners were never more than momentarily disturbed by the demands of their dusky cupids. The babies were nursed, slept on reed mats, cooed and played as their mothers started the primer. Once in a while one would whimper his way to his mother's back to be lulled to sleep to the syllabic tune of *a ba da na*. They cooed on as their mothers advanced into reading the phonetically written Kikongo language.

I had a young graduate of our primary school as a helper. When my husband and I were out in the African bush for evangelistic trips she carried on the classes. Each time I returned to the station I listened to my gems read. I could honestly exclaim over their progress. I praised them profusely. They had earned praise and they needed praise! We made friends with each other as they discovered a wonderful new world through reading.

When they could read I introduced them to writing. Calloused hands used to hoeing huge gardens, gathering firewood and pounding daily food were ill-adapted to the delicate wielding of small, obstinate pencils. They struggled, perspiring over their pages of laboured writing. There were never any truants, never any complaints, never any tears — except for joy ! Sheer joy of intoxicating accomplishment. They were learning to read, learning to write! Shedding years, yes, centuries of inherited book-blindness.

Mama Tunga was radiant when she could read the Christmas story at our women's meeting just three months after launching into literacy. I listened with a lump of pride in my throat. "Oh, Mama!" she said the next day, "now I can read books like my son reads books." Her son was eight or nine years old then, a pupil in our mission school.

The books following the picture primer for adults are four books of "Stories of Jesus". They are progressively difficult, leading the new reader from the primer to the reading of the

Bible. When the first group of Sona Bata women finished the fourth book we were all victors. I baked a cake and decorated it with pink frosting. We had a tea party with most of the women as unaccustomed to forks as they had been unaccustomed to pencils. The party to celebrate their accomplishments developed into a "Thank-you" party. They wanted to thank their *ntangisi* (one who teaches reading). Congo jewels — lovely ladies, gay gracious and grateful.

The classes were popular. A third porch class was begun for teen-age illiterate girls who lived in nearby villages. We enlisted Congolese volunteers to teach evening classes in two rooms available at the hospital. We had one class for illiterates, one for begininning readers — men and women. Two classes were started at our leprosy colony. Men and women patients were enthusiastic and thanked us with almost perfect attendance. We found two of the leprosy patients well enough educated to work with us in the teaching. Soon they were carrying the two daily classes. Men and women patients with leprosy-scarred faces and stubby fingers smiled and temporarily forgot the discouragements of their sickness in the learning of reading and writing.

In December 1953 I had to say goodbye to those friends of the porch-and-dining-room, hospital and leprosy colony classes. They were left with instructions to share their knowledge with others. The hospital classes continued under Mrs. Freas and the leprosy colony classes continued under Dr. Carrie Sprague.

So we came to work in our mission Bible School located at Kikongo on the Wamba River, a tributary of the Congo. Our morning work with the young men students is our mission's major concern here. We are training them to be Congo's future church leaders. In the afternoon we have classes for their wives. That is important too. There is a competitive entrance exam for the men but their wives may range from illiterates to primary school graduates. The first class to enter after our arrival brought us three illiterate wives and one beginning reader. I took them as my personal handwork. They would have four years here. We had four years to teach and polish these gems.

Mama Ntumba, the beginner, had a head start. Here at Kikongo she had no excuses to miss class. We have two women

and five school girls care for the children while the mothers are in class. They have a midafternoon break to look in on their small fry and nurse the smallest fry.

Illiterate Mama Mfutila and Mama Kilunda came from Moanza, our most isolated mission station. They bore marks of their primitive background — scarified faces, filed teeth, tattooed bodies. These are all Congo marks of beauty. Teeth filed to points may indicate cannibalistic ancestry. But both Mfutila and Kilunda were shy and very much awed with holding a book, holding a pencil and holding their own in an organized class.

Mama Nsembo was the other illiterate. She, her small son and her husband, Makengo, came from Sona Bata. When they were started off for Kikongo they somehow got on a truck going to Moanza. We located them at Moanza by our inter-station radio hook-up. Actually they had been "dumped" some distance from Moanza and had arrived there tired, discouraged and on the verge of acquiring an addition to their family. On Sunday Mama Nsembo gave birth to a baby boy, whom they appropriaately named Moanza. It was decided that she should rest Monday — one day! Tuesday they bounced the nine-hour truck ride to Kikongo. Classes had already started. Thursday afternoon Mama Nsembo appeared for class! Our women are expected to come to class but we do suggest they take two weeks off when they have a baby.

"Mama Nsembo, you don't have to enter class this week. Wait until you are settled and stronger", I advised. Mama Nsembo was not to be dissuaded. "I have strength", she replied. "I want to learn to read !"

One afternoon a few months later, Mama Nsembo came to sewing class with a pained expression on her face. Before handing her the sewing materials I asked, "Aren't you feeling well, Nsembo?"

"I have trouble in my stomach, but I can sew." She took her sewing bag.

She couldn't stay indoors. She sat on the veranda in the shade. Her forehead was beaded with perspiration. Tears came to her eyes but she would not go home. The other women could hardly contain themselves and didn't for long. The story came

out as we visited, laughed, sewed, knitted and patched. The food in this section of Congo is different than the food in Nsembo's village. That morning the women had been gathering caterpillars, a source of protein in their diet. The kind of caterpillar they were gathering that day is furry and requires a special skill in preparation. As I understand it they must be "de-fuzzed", scraped and properly cooked. Nsembo lacked the certain skill. The caterpillars she had eaten for lunch were causing all the difficulty. Mama Nsembo and the caterpillars battled it out all afternoon to the amusement of all the women.

Three of these four Congo gems — Nsembo, Kilunda, Ntumba — are now completing the third year of work in our women's school. One afternoon last year Mama Nsembo led the women's meeting. She spoke about "The Christian Home". Only two years before she had come to us an illiterate "gem-in-the-rough". We are still polishing.

Just before Christmas last year I mimeographed a picture of an attractive Congolese woman. I gave one to each of our women during art class. I had more to teach than creative art that day. I explained that each woman was to color the picture using her own clothing as the color scheme. They happily colored and showed each other their finished pictures. "Look at me! Look at me!" Then I asked them to open their Bibles to Proverbs 31 : 10. Each one was to copy the words under her picture : "*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.*" As expected, one asked, "What are *malubi?*" — the vernacular for rubies. I explained something like this, "A ruby is a very precious and beautiful jewel. Rubies are used in monarchs' crowns and in very expensive rings". We talked on about the value of a jewel and the value of a woman. I suggested that each woman put the picture with the verse on the wall of her home to remind her of her own *worth*. Each one is a valuable asset to her husband, her children and her native land. Each one has left her special glow in my heart and memory. And every one we have taught, every one we are teaching and everyone we may teach in the future is a precious jewel to the King of Kings who is "*no respecter of persons*".

A LETTER FROM AN EX-EDITOR

How the Congo News Letter Came To Be

DEAR CONGO FRIENDS,

WE send our greetings and good wishes to our friends who are far away.

We note with interest and appreciation that Mrs. Uhlinger is in the line of succession of editors of the Congo News Letter. In 1910 during the annual conference which was held at Matadi and was attended by the Congo-Sudan Commission, the first commission to visit the Congo Mission, I dared to suggest that the Conference make provision for such a periodical. At first there was no response to the suggestion and I felt that as a new and inexperienced missionary I had made a fool of myself in suggesting it. At a later session Mr. Paul Metzger arose and said that he had been thinking about the proposal and believed it should have consideration. Dr. Johnson Myers, a member of the Commission supported him and said he had had something of the kind in his Chicago church and had found it to be very helpful. That called forth some other favorable opinions and led to the appointment of myself, Mr. Metzger and Mrs. Frederickson as a committee to arrange for such a periodical. The committee had a hurried meeting and voted to leave the entire matter with me. I thought it over a bit and sent a letter to each of the stations asking for a report of the visit of the Commission to the station which would be used in the first number which would be gotten out as soon as possible. The response was fairly good. In the meantime we could not find a way of having it printed. But Mr. Moon who was at Kimpese did have a mimeograph and was willing to use it to meet the need. So I got the materials, tried to put them in shape and sent them on to him and the mimeographing was done and the copies mailed from there. This plan was not satisfactory so after the second issue materials were sent directly to Mr. Moon and the work was done there. The first seven numbers were gotten out in this way.

After the second or third number Mrs. Geil and I went on furlough and Mr. Moon took over the entire job with the expectation that we would get back in time to take over from him before he went on furlough. We were delayed and Dr. Catherine Mabie got out the seventh and last mimeographed number. We were encouraged in that *Missions* printed in full the contents of the first number.

While we were on furlough the Board decided that Mrs. Geil and myself should go to Mukimvika, which is in Portuguese Angola, and reopen the work there. This made it impossible to take up the work of what had then become known as the Congo News Letter and had been assigned to us by the Conference. The job was assigned to Rev. L. F. Wood of Tshumbiri. He carried on the work for a few years having the printing done at Bolobo, a British Baptist station. After our second furlough I was again assigned to the work of the C.N.L. and had the entire job at Banza Manteke, including printing, from the beginning of 1920 to the beginning of 1924. Since then the work has been in charge of various people at various stations.

The C.N.L. of today is a fine job and I wish it every success. I hope you have a big subscription list although I suspect that it is still true that most of the subscriptions are paid for by missionaries. The very first issue was paid for from conference funds; then several issues by a few of us as individuals and after that we had a subscription rate which was paid largely by missionaries who had the paper sent to friends and churches.

Tell our Congolese friends that we are remembering them and are hoping and praying that they may be true and faithful to their Lord and to his work. And wishing the Missionary staff every joy and blessing in your work I am with *Mama* Geil.

Cordially and Sincerely Yours,

Tata Geil

MEET THE PEOPLE AT MOANZA

By Joy and Cliff Stabell

LET'S call this a visit to Moanza. If you were to come here, you would probably travel by plane as far as Kikwit, where we would meet you, and we would drive from there a day's trip on sandy roads winding through the rolling green hills (green during the rainy season, that is). The first thing that would impress you at Moanza would no doubt be the beauty of its location. Our front porch looks out upon an ever-changing valley beyond which can be seen ridge upon ridge of hills. You would be awed by the magnificence of some of our sunsets. Truly God's creation speaks to His glory here.

As we take a tour of the station you would be impressed by something else — the friendliness of our people. Everywhere you are met with friendly smiles, a cheery "*Kiambote*" or "*Moyo*" and the customary clapping of hands — the Kikongo greeting. If the car should stop, a crowd of school children would soon gather, eager for a smile and word of greeting.

Let us show you around. Here is our church, in a central location, even as we desire God to be central in our lives. Nearby is the new women's center. Beyond are the girls' dormitories and new classrooms. Here is our hospital. We're breaking ground over there for a new surgery. We are grateful for the many permanent three and five-room houses which we have been able to provide for our Congolese staff — teachers, nurses, pastor and workmen.

We'd like you to meet some of them, too. This is our pastor; how you would enjoy his fine sermons on Sunday morning. His wife, *Naomi*, is in charge of the girls' school. We are proud of her. She is one of the outstanding Christian women of Congo. The peace which Christ has given her is revealed in her face, and the dignity of her bearing any woman would envy.

That man over there with the heart-warming smile? That's *Keti*, our head-mason, supervisor of our workmen, a "self-made" man. He's had a minimum of formal education, but he is a student of the Bible. He is superintendent of our Sunday School,

a fine Bible teacher and can preach stirring messages at our Worship Service. An outstanding layman.

Muvuyu is responsible for our village and district schools — over 100 of them. He must see to it that they keep up to the government standards. He's a big help to our pastors, too. At a leadership conference recently he encouraged the laymen to have family prayers, saying that even the youngest of his children has learned how to pray.

That man reading from the Bible to a group of people is *Ngalu*, our hospital evangelist. In his love for the souls of men and women he has led over 100 in the last year to an acceptance of Christ as Saviour.

There are other men and women, spiritual and educational leaders of their people; nurses of high caliber like *Mambuki* are examples of the better-trained generation, and *Kitsangi* who though older, has been schooled by experience in medical work. You would want to look into the classrooms and meet our seven men and four women teachers, all capable and earnest, leading and counseling young lives for Christ.

We are positive that you will not forget this short visit. Your heart has responded to the beauty, life, vigor and light of our station and its people. To think that we as missionaries wake up to this challenging task every morning. Fortunate are those lov ing Christians at home who by giving and praying have made this modern miracle possible in the heart of Africa.

Off the record.....

THE tower which you see being eased into place on the cover of this issue of Congo News Letter is of course that of the new Boko church, which has quickly become famous and greatly envied in the whole of our Congo field. That's Builder "*Scotty*" (*Chester Scott*) and his Bayaka and Bakongo helpers nonchalantly perched on the rough poles which served as scaffolding. The church was built in less than 10 months, mostly with very unskilled workers and certainly none of them were used to building huge roof trusses, towers, or even painting walls up so close to the clouds; yet not one accident marred the whole proceedings. Dedication day, June 16th, was like a Mission conference with

Missionary and Congolese representatives from each of our stations present. Mission secretary *Ben Armstrong* read letters from many friends in America; *Phil Uhlinger* preached the dedication sermon and during the service *Scotty* and his Congolese assistant *Kidiela* were each presented with lovely leather-bound Kikongo Bibles as a symbol of the appreciation of the Boko people. *Lewis Brown*, who built another lovely sanctuary at Kikongo a few years ago, also participated in the service. Dedication day was appropriately closed with an evening communion service presided over by *Bill Robbins*, who with his wife *Helen* opened the station and who, except for furlough time, has been there ever since, and by *Bob Barnett*, new missionary soon to join the Boko staff. In "God's House at Boko", *Helen Robbins* gives us the background of these happy events and elsewhere *Scotty* and his wife, *Dolores* tell a few of the joys and tribulations of acting as Mission Builder.

Not too long before the dedication of the Boko Church, another important event took place at a much older station. Sona Bata celebrated its 50th anniversary and over 2000 "alumnae" chartered a special train to bring them down from Léo to help celebrate. *Roland Metzger*, Sona Bata's evangelist tells the story of that day in his article. A special highlight of the day was the pageant presented under the direction of *Eva Shepard* who had spent weeks and months gleaning information from all the *bambuta* (elders) of the area about almost lost details of Sona Bata's history. The anniversary was Sona Bata's second big gathering this year for earlier in '57 she had been hostess to *Mbundani*, the Congo Baptist "convention". *Madelyn Albrecht* and her *ménagère* (home ec.) girls did the cooking and much of the planning.

Often new missionaries see the people, the mission station and the situation out here with clearer eyes than some of us who have grown used to Congo. That's why we're happy to bring to you three of their articles .... from the *Stabells* of Moanza, the *Frasers* of Kikongo, and Margaret Alsen of Léo.

Last year, following our December CNL we were happy to receive word from many of you that you had enjoyed the yuletide calendar. We hope to bring out another one this Christmas and if anyone wishes extra copies, please let us know via Airmail so that the required number may be printed. R. U.

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